

Capitol Hill Faces Fury Over Leaks

Embarrassing Disclosures, And a White House End Run

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Covering any embarrassment over awkward disclosures under a display of anger, the Ford administration has reacted to leaks of the House Intelligence Committee report by trying to focus blame on Capitol Hill.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger denied as "utterly irresponsible" one charge contained in a published version of the report by Rep. Otis G. Pike's committee, but the administration seemed intent on diverting attention from the report's content.

While the administration's focus yesterday was initially on the Hill, the role of journalists in obtaining the report for publication also was beginning to draw attention.

PRESIDENT FORD stressed the issue of secrecy by offering to House Speaker Carl L. Albert "full resources and services of the executive branch" for trying to determine how the report reached the press. It had leaked last month, but the publication of excerpts Wednesday by the Village Voice in New York brought Ford's anger over the situation to a boil.

Kissinger was angry, too — so emotionally involved that he was tense and edgy at a news conference yesterday. The material that the administration gave the Pike committee in secrecy had been distorted "to produce a malicious lie," he charged.

"We are facing here a new version of McCarthyism," Kissinger asserted.

He refused to discuss material in the report, however, although he told one questioner that "in a democracy the government has an obligation to keep the public informed. . . ."

OTHER SUBJECTS that Kissinger wrapped in secrecy included Soviet microwave radiations in attempts to bug the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and Lockheed Aircraft Corp.'s bribes to foreign officials.

The administration anger did not immediately move the Hill to any action. Albert said he had "no response" to Ford's offer of FBI agents.

A White House congressional liaison aide, Max Friedersdorf, had consulted Albert's staff before Ford's offer was made public, the Associated Press reported. But an aide to Albert said the speaker "decided that if the President is serious about it he'll (Ford will) probably follow up personally."

Albert referred the committee report to five House committees for further consideration, but not release to the public. The full House had voted Jan. 29 not to make the report public.

That was, however, after bits and pieces of it already had leaked to the press. What really seemed new in the excerpts of the report published by the Village Voice was the harshness of the language condemning U.S. intelligence failures and Kissinger personally.

BOTH KISSINGER and the White House press secretary, Ronald Nessen, have been railing against the disclosure of secret material from the Hill. Their reaction yesterday was an intensification of their campaign against making available highly sensitive executive branch material to a sieve-like Congress.

Nessen asserted that the executive branch only received a copy of the first draft of the Pike committee report. A Capitol Hill source said the version printed by the Voice was the final one, adopted by the committee by a 9-4 vote.

But this source denied that the administration lacked access to the final version, thus denying Nessen's implication that the leak had to have come from Congress rather than the executive branch.

The committee staff director, Searle Field, "refused to give the CIA the final draft," the source said. "But a member of the committee gave them both versions. I assume copies were made before they were returned."

Pike, D-N.Y., had suggested that the CIA might have leaked the report. Nessen tried to scotch that idea, saying Ford's "predisposition" was to assume that the leak was from a congressional source.

Ford talked with his top advisers for 45 minutes yesterday morning before deciding to offer help to Albert. Nessen told reporters Albert had not asked for assistance, but that the President assumed the speaker would want to find out how "some-

IN FACT, knowledge of the report's contents, and apparently one full copy of it, had reached the press before the Jan. 29 vote to withhold it.

The leakage "presents two problems," Kissinger told his news conference. One is "the use of highly classified information in violation of an agreement between the executive branch and the legislative branch."

The other, he said, is "the use of classified information in a manner that is so distorted, so geared to preconceived ideas, that the total impact is to produce a malicious lie. . . . Even where documents in themselves are correct, they are taken so out of context and they are so fitted into a preconceived pattern that we are facing here a new version of McCarthyism."

Kissinger added that this use "in a tendentious, misleading and totally irresponsible fashion . . . has already done damage to the foreign policy of the United States."

THE ONE POINT from the report on which Kissinger answered a direct question involved the rebellion by Kurds in Iraq. Published reports have said the United States supported the rebels but then double-crossed them and abandoned them to defeat.

"That is a total falsehood," Kissinger declared testily. "But it is impossible in these covert operations to explain the truth without creating even more difficulties."

The secretary implied that efforts were being made to drive him from office by some of the charges in the report and elsewhere.

"If I should conclude that it is in the interest of American foreign policy, I would step down" from being secretary of state, he said. "But what one also has to consider is whether the style of public debate should be that any public figure can be destroyed by the most irresponsible and flagrant charges, and that then the argument should be made that the effective-